



February 12, 2004

Mike Leavitt, Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Bldg.
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Leavitt:

I am writing to urge your agency to reconsider and reverse your proposal to ease restrictions on mercury emissions.

This proposal would significantly lessen the target for reducing mercury emissions from power plants. With the proven threat mercury presents to public health, the proposed rules seek to treat this serious issue in a manner that is very disturbing.

Your draft plan would put in place a "cap and trade" system similar to the program established to reduce acid rain. While that system has effectively reduced emissions that cause acid rain, the nature of mercury makes this same "cap and trade" approach unacceptable to many in the public health community. Mercury is known to be far more dangerous to health than the pollutants in acid rain. The most hazardous chemical forms of mercury emitted by power plants are known to accumulate near the emissions source. To remove mercury from the list of most toxic pollutants, which the proposed plan does, would be a major step backward for our country to take in working for cleaner air and a healthier environment for our citizens.

If the planned rules were to be approved, it would represent a reversal of progress we have made in cleaning up our air quality. For people living near coal-burning power plants, the cumulative effects of mercury would contribute to the buildup of "hot spots" for mercury contamination.

The threat that mercury poses to our country is real. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that eight percent of women of childbearing age have unsafe levels of mercury in their blood. Nearly all states have issued warnings about fish being contaminated by mercury. Michigan has issued warnings that women of childbearing age and children should not eat fish caught in any of our inland lakes (we have over 12,000).
M. Leavitt

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Any measure taken by the EPA that does not reduce mercury in the air in every instance is inappropriate public policy.

Again, I urge you to reconsider and reverse your Agency's proposal to ease restrictions on mercury emissions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Brater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Liz" being more prominent than the last name "Brater".

Liz Brater
State Senator

LB:mms